

4.4.2.7 IMPACTS FROM THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, power shortages would be more frequent than shortages under the Proposed Action and action alternatives. No change to existing conditions would be expected.

4.5 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

4.5.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section assesses the potential for environmental justice impacts that would result from the implementation of the Proposed Action and alternatives.

Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” provides that “each Federal agency shall make achieving EJ part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations and Indian tribes.” The EO requires the EPA and all other Federal agencies, as well as state agencies receiving Federal funds, to develop standards to address this issue. The CEQ has oversight of the Federal government’s compliance with EO 12898 and NEPA. The CEQ has developed implementation guidance for EJ under NEPA, dated December 10, 1997.

4.5.1.1 RESOURCE STUDY AREA

The EJ study area consists of Sutter, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Contra Costa, and Alameda counties (Segments A through H). The area of consideration includes both urban and rural areas, including the Sacramento metropolitan area. The Proposed Action, Alternative 1, and No Action ROWs would pass through the City of Sacramento.

4.5.1.2 ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Environmental justice considerations focus on the potential for disproportionate impacts resulting from Federal activities on minority populations, low-income communities, and tribes. Specifically, EJ issues include such things as the potential physical displacement of populations and employment and income impacts. Other issues may include the potential for adverse impacts on community institutions and organizations, reductions in access to public services, traditional and religious practices, and forms of land use, and community cultural character. Impacts related to these issues could occur temporarily during construction and for the long term after construction.

Participation in the project by Indian tribes and other potentially affected minorities and the effects of potential rate increases were issues identified during the public scoping

process. Rate increases might affect low-income populations more than others. While rate increases are not included in the Proposed Action and alternatives, they could occur as a result of the added cost of improving Western’s transmission system.

4.5.1.3 CHARACTERIZATION

The majority of the transmission line ROWs included in the Proposed Action and alternatives is in rural areas, except for portions of the Proposed Action and Alternative 1 and the No Action Alternative that would pass through Sacramento in an existing transmission ROW. Segment B from MP 4.0 to the Elverta Substation and Segment C from the Elverta Substation to MP 3.5 are adjacent to Rio Linda. Segment C from MP 3.5 to the Hurley Substation passes through the City of Sacramento. Segment D from the Hurley Substation to the Hedge Substation is within Sacramento. Segment D between MP 13.0 to 15.0 is adjacent to Elk Grove. Otherwise, residences and farms are scattered along the length of the line.

Minority and low-income populations are found in each county in the study area. Among these counties, San Joaquin and Sacramento counties have the highest percentages of residents below the poverty line (18.8 and 17.2 percent, respectively) and have Hispanic populations that are 30.5 and 16.0 percent of their respective total populations.

4.5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.5.2.1 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

As noted in Section 4.5.1.1 above, EO 12898 guides EJ analyses. The CEQ has also issued guidance on compliance with EO 12898 (*Environmental Justice: Guidance Under the National Environmental Policy Act*, 1997). Based on this guidance, Western has coordinated the assessment of potential EJ impacts with air quality, cultural resources, electromagnetic fields, health and safety, noise impact assessments, and socioeconomics (see Sections, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.8, 4.10, and 4.12 respectively). The EJ analysis has determined how the types of impacts addressed in these other sections could disproportionately affect low-income and minority populations. Minority and low-income populations would incur significant and adverse impacts if they experience a disproportionate share of the adverse effects caused by the Proposed Action or alternatives.

4.5.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES

EPMS described in the air quality, cultural resources, electromagnetic fields, health and safety, noise impact assessments, and socioeconomic sections would also help minimize and avoid adverse impacts to minority and low-income populations (see Sections, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.8, 4.10, and 4.12

respectively). These EPMs include consultation with potentially affected Native Americans. On this project, and as further described in Section 4.3, Western consulted with the California NAHC and three Federally recognized tribes: the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, the Ione Band of the Miwok Indians, and the United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria. Contact was also made with groups who have petitioned for Federal recognition status. These include the Muwekma Indian Tribe, the Miwok Indian Community of the Wilton Rancheria and the Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan. Consultation helps avoid and minimize adverse impacts to Native Americans by better defining their concerns, locations of TCPs, and cultural practices that could be affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives.

4.5.2.3 IMPACTS FROM PROPOSED ACTION—NEW TRANSMISSION O'BANION SUBSTATION TO ELVERTA SUBSTATION; REALIGNMENTS; RECONDUCTORING ELVERTA SUBSTATION TO TRACY SUBSTATION

Most of the Proposed Action would be constructed in existing ROW, and the portion that would require new ROW (Segments A₁ and G) would mostly be next to existing ROW. It would be carefully sited to avoid any displacement of nearby rural residences or businesses. Therefore, no minority or low-income populations would be displaced and the Proposed Action would not divide the communities they live in. Construction could cause minor adverse impacts, such as traffic diversions at detours, or adverse air quality and noise impacts near the routes construction trucks would travel, or where construction equipment is used. Minority or low-income landowners could experience negative impacts if their land is needed for part of the new ROW included in the Proposed Action; however, most affected land is undeveloped or agricultural. No businesses or residences would be displaced. The acquisition of land for new ROW is not expected to cause significant or disproportionate impacts to minority and low-income populations.

Other low-income or minority individuals could experience positive employment and income impacts if hired as part of a construction crew needed to work on the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would improve the reliability of power supplies in the areas served by the related transmission lines, which could help avoid adverse employment and income impacts during power shortages.

Western's EPMs include siting facilities to avoid TCPs and other cultural sites important to Native Americans. These practices and compliance with the cultural resources PA during post-EIS phases of Proposed Action implementation would help avoid and minimize adverse impacts to Native Americans.

Cultural resources, EMFs, health and safety, and socioeconomic analyses (Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.8 and 4.12, respectively) all defined potential impacts on minority and low-income populations. However, given Western's EPMs, and the nature and location of the Proposed Action, none of these impacts is expected to be significant. Minority and low-income populations are not expected to be disproportionately impacted.

4.5.2.4 IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 1—RECONDUCTORING O'BANION SUBSTATION TO TRACY SUBSTATION

The impacts of Alternative 1 on minority and low-income populations would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action. No new ROW would be required. Minority and low-income populations are not expected to be disproportionately impacted.

4.5.2.5 IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 2—NEW TRANSMISSION O'BANION SUBSTATION TO ELVERTA SUBSTATION AND REALIGNMENTS

The impacts of Alternative 2 on minority and low-income populations would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action. Minority and low-income populations are not expected to be disproportionately impacted.

4.5.2.6 IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 3—NEW TRANSMISSION ELK GROVE SUBSTATION TO TRACY SUBSTATION

The impacts of Alternative 3 on minority and low-income populations would be similar to those described for the Proposed Action. Minority and low-income populations are not expected to be disproportionately impacted.

4.5.2.7 IMPACTS FROM THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, power shortages may be more frequent than shortages under the Proposed Action and action alternatives. Power shortages can have a disproportionate impact on low-income and minority workers with hourly wages, as opposed to salaries, who work for manufacturing and other businesses especially affected by disruptions in power service.

4.6 FLOODPLAINS

4.6.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section describes existing floodplain conditions within the study area and how the Proposed Action and alternatives would affect floodplains. Floodplains perform the natural, vital function of conveying and dissipating the volume and energy of peak, surface runoff flows downstream. Periodic flood flows form and sustain specific habitat types (such as wetland and riparian areas) within the floodplains (see